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### Soccer Marketing in the United States

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# **Soccer Marketing in the United States**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Soccer is continuing to grow in popularity in the United States. According to the U.S. Soccer Federation, there are more than 4 million players in the US, more than double the number in 1990 (Belson, 2010). The Sports and Fitness Industry Association (formerly SGMA) has found that total participation in soccer had increased nearly 3% annually in 2011 (Physical Activity Council, 2011). According to another SFIA study, however, a shortage of facilities and emphasis on tournament and showcase events may result in potential future downturn in participation (Athletic Business, 2012).

There is also a shifting emphasis from tournament and showcase events (winning trophies) to player development, as evidenced by the formation of U.S. Soccer's Development Academy and US Club Soccer's National Premier Leagues. In addition, there is an increasing proliferation of the club-centric model.

Marketing efforts have primarily focused on two main areas: increased participation, particularly at the youth level (Physical Activity Council, 2011; Hopkins, 2010; Wangerin, 2008) and increased revenue, spectatorship, and competitive success at the Olympic, World Cup, and professional levels (Kuper & Szymanski, 2012; Bondy, 2010; Dure, 2010; Wangerin, 2008; Pons & Standifird, 2007; Southall & Nagel, 2007). The results of these efforts have been mixed (Hopkins, 2010).

There are many organizations in the United States whose main goal is to positively impact, market, and manage the growth of soccer at various levels of participation. The present study will summarize the historical, current, and future marketing efforts (including successes and failures) of the following organizations:

- U.S. Soccer Foundation
- U.S. Club Soccer
- U.S. Soccer Federation
- Major League Soccer
- United Soccer Leagues
- American Youth Soccer Organization
- United States Adult Soccer Association
- National Soccer Coaches Association of America

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Dr. Brian Crow is Professor of Sport Management at Slippery Rock University, earned his Ed.D. and MBA from West Virginia University, and is former president of the North American Society for Sport Management.

Dr. Dennis Phillips has been a college assistant athletic director, assistant director of marketing and special events for the Volleyball Hall of Fame, Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) to Conference USA and the NCAA, and has been a sport management professor and administrator for the past 38 years, the last 20 of which have been at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Dr. Branch is an Associate Professor and Graduate Program Coordinator in Sport Management at West Virginia University. He received his graduate degrees in Sports Administration from Ohio University.

A graduate of Slippery Rock University (B.S.) and the University of Minnesota (M.Ed.), Greg Hutton is the Director of Projects and Communications at US Club Soccer.